United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General deeply grieved over death of Fijian soldier of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon from wounds received during recent incidents in southern Lebanon.

+ Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Cyrus Vance, to go to Yugoslavia tomorrow, 4 March, to meet with all principal leaders prior to deployment of United Nations peace-keepers; Secretary-General to brief Force Commander and military and civilian personnel tomorrow at Headquarters.

+ Secretary-General says "alternative courses of action" and "new approach" to question of Western Sahara will be necessary if agreement on existing United Nations plan is not reached by end of May.

+ Representative of Russian Federation tells Outer Space Subcommittee that space technology plays effective role in monitoring state of environment.

+ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that Myanmar refugee influx is turning Bangladesh situation into "major crisis".

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has expressed grief over reports of the death of a member of the Fijian contingent of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) from wounds he received during recent incidents in southern Lebanon. The 25-year-old Fijian peacekeeper, Petain Sorovakatini, was seriously wounded on 20 February in crossfire between the Israeli Defence Force and armed elements in the Nepalese battalion's area of deployment.

The Secretary-General said through his Spokeswoman, Nadia Younes, that the death once again underlined risks to which United Nations peacekeepers were exposed in service for peace. He extended his heartfelt condolences to the soldier's family and to the Government of Fiji.

(more)

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Quoting statistics, Ms. Younes said that the death of the Fijian soldier last night brought to 25 the number of Fijians killed since the beginning of UNIFIL in 1978. She noted that 185 UNIFIL soldiers have died since the establishment of the Force.

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A United Nations spokeswoman announced today that the Secretary-General has requested his Personal representative for Yugoslavia, Cyrus Vance, to pay a further visit to the country. Accompanied by his Special Adviser, Ambassador Herbert Okun, Mr. Vance will arrive in Belgrade tomorrow, 4 March. He will also travel to Zagreb and Sarajevo.

The Spokeswoman said that the Secretary-General had decided that Mr. Vance should pay one more visit to Yugoslavia before the first United Nations peace-keepers arrive next week. The purpose of the trip was to meet once more with all principal political and military leaders, especially in Belgrade and Zagreb.

At the invitation of Lord Carrington, Mr. Vance would round up his mission by attending the Ninth Plenary Meeting of the European Community's Conference on Yugoslavia, scheduled to take place in Brussels on Monday, 9 March.

The Spokeswoman further announced that Lieutenant Colonel Satish Nambiar, the newly-appointed Force Commander of the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR), would meet with the Secretary-General tomorrow at Headquarters; intensive briefings of the Force Commander, senior military personnel and the civilian component are scheduled to start tomorrow and to continue through Friday. Those attending briefings, approximately 32 persons, would leave New York on Saturday, 7 March, arriving in Yugoslavia on Sunday. Personnel from each of UNPROFOR's 12 battalions would begin arriving on 10 March, with the largest contingents scheduled to arrive between 12 and 16 March.

Meanwhile, the Secretary-General has forwarded a letter to the President of the Security Council containing a proposal for the military elements of the UNPROFOR. The countries contributing troops to the Force are Argentina, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Ghana, Ireland, Kenya, Luxembourg, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali says it will be necessary to consider "alternative courses of action and possibly adopt a new approach to the whole problem" if an agreement on the implementation of the existing United Nations plan for Western Sahara has not been reached by the end of May, 1992.

(more)

In his report to the Security Council, dated 28 February, Mr. Boutros-Ghali states that although he is not able to propose a revised timetable for the referendum which should have taken place in January, he recommends that the current level of activity of United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) be maintained for a three-month period until the end of May. The primary function of MINURSO in its present limited deployment is to monitor the cease-fire, which, he says, has held for five and a half months.

The Secretary-General reports that the difficulties that have arisen with the two parties regarding the interpretation of some essential elements of the settlement plan have had an adverse effect on its implementation. This, he says, together with the fact that the United Nations has never bere organized a referendum of this kind, explains to a large degree the delay that has occurred. (S/23662)

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Space technology played an effective role in monitoring the state of the environment and the unfavourable ecological changes occurring on land, sea and air, the representative of the Russian Federation, Boris Khabiriv, told the the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Outer Space Committee yesterday.

In an address to the Committee, as it began consideration of the earth environment, he said the problem of organizing a global system of space monitoring of the ecology was becoming ever more timely. The outer space Committee could play an important part in that process.

Speaking for the United States, Peter G. Smith said Mission to Planet Earth was his country's concept for an international science programme to produce the understanding needed to predict and respond to accelerated environmental changes on the earth. A vital part of the Mission to Planet Earth programme, he went on, was data received from space-based satellites, such as the Upper Atmosphere Research Satellite. It was making critical measurements of the ozone concentration, energy input and chemical composition of the upper atmosphere.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported today that the dramatic influx of Myanmar refugees was rapidly turning the situation in Bangladesh into one of the world's major refugee crisis.

In a press release issued at Headquarters, the Agency said that between 5,000 and 7,000 refugees were streaming across the border from Myanmar daily, and official government estimates had put the number of refugees at over 90,000. It said High Commissioner Sadako Ogata had released $2.7 million from her emergency fund to meet the immediate needs of the refugees and would issue an international appeal shortly.

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